

Message Text

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11

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 SAJ-01 /081 W
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R 061711Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3563

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

USCINCEUR

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 7781

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, SP, VIP (PRINCE JUAN CARLOS)

SUBJECT: IMPRESSIVE START FOR JUAN CARLOS AS ACTING HEAD OF STATE

REF: MADRID 7587

SUMMARY: JUDGING FROM PRIVATE COMMENTS AND MEDIA TREATMENT IN SPAIN AND AVAILABLE REPORTS FROM ABROAD, JUAN CARLOS' INITIAL ACTIONS HAVE ALREADY MAKE A MARK ON HIS OWN PEOPLE AND TRIGGERED A POSITIVE REACTION IN EUROPE. AT A TIME WHEN SPANIARDS FEARED A VACUUM OF POWER THE PRINCE HAS AT THE BEGINNING GIVEN AN EXAMPLE OF ENERGETIC LEADERSHIP IN EFFECT USHERING IN THE
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POST-FRANCO ERA. END SUMMARY

1. PRINCE JUAN CARLOS HAS LOST NO TIME IN DEMONSTRATING A CAPACITY TO STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION AS ACTING HEAD OF STATE. WHEREAS HIS FIRST ASSUMPTION OF TEMPORARY HEADSHIP OF STATE TOOK PLACE DURING THE SUMMER VACATION PERIOD IN 1974, HIS DESIGNATION AS ACTING HEAD OF STATE ON OCT 30, 1975 CAME AT A MOMENT WHEN THE SAHARAN CRISIS WAS AT ITS PEAK. IF THE EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES WERE DIFFERENT THIS TIME, SO WERE THE IMPORTANT DETAILS OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THE PRINCE WAS EMPOWERED TO STAND IN FOR FRANCO AND THE MANNER IN WHICH HE HAS REACTED TO THE CHALLENGE.

2. CONTRARY TO THE PROCEDURE FOLLOWED IN JULY 1974, THE PREMIER'S NOTIFICATION TO THE "CORTES" OF THE APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 11 OF THE ORGANIC LAW PROVIDING FOR JUAN CARLOS TO ASSUME TEMPORARILY THE FUNCTIONS OF HEAD OF STATE DID NOT MENTION ANY PRIOR CONSULTATION WITH FRANCO (REFTEL).

3. AS IF TO ILLUSTRATE THIS POINT, JUAN CARLOS CHAIRED THE CABINET MEETING OCT 31 AT THE ZARZUELA, HIS PERSONAL PALACE, AND NOT THE PARDO. DURING FRANCO'S FIRST ILLNESS THE PRINCE CHAIRED A CABINET MEETING AT FRANCO'S SUMMER RESIDENCE AND AT THE PARDO. INDEED, THE PRINCE HAS MADE THE ZARZUELA THE NEW FOCUS OF HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL ACTIVITY; THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE NATIONAL DEFENSE COUNCIL WAS HELD THERE NOV 2 AND HE RECEIVED MOROCCAN PREMIER OSMAN THERE NOV 3.

4. THE PRINCE'S LIGHTNING VISIT TO THE SAHARA NOV 2 HAS GIVEN A SHOT IN THE ARM TO HIS PUBLIC IMAGE. AT A TIME WHEN THE PUBLIC WAS WONDERING WHAT SPAIN WOULD DO ABOUT THE SAHARA WHILE FRANCO WAS PROSTRATE THE PRINCE CAPTURED HEADLINES WITH AN EMINENTLY POPULAR GESTURE WHICH EVEN THE ILLEGAL OPPOSITION HAS PRAISED. JUAN CARLOS, WHO HAS HIMSELF HAD A MORE INTENSIVE MILITARY EDUCATION THAN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION, ALSO SUCCEEDED IN IDENTIFYING HIMSELF WITH THE ARMED FORCES AT A CRITICAL JUNCTURE FOR THEM AND AT A CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN SPAIN'S INTERNAL DESTINY. HE HAS UNDOUBTEDLY STRENGTHENED HIS POLITICAL BASE WITH THE MILITARY.

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5. INASMUCH AS THE HEAD OF STATE IS NOT REQUIRED TO ATTEND MEETINGS OF THE NATIONAL DEFENSE COUNCIL BUT HAS THE POWER TO CONVOKE AND PRESIDE OVER MEETINGS (ARTICLE 7 OF THE ORGANIC LAW) IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT JUAN CARLOS DECIDED TO EXERCISE THIS PREROGATIVE EARLY AND IN DECISIVE CIRCUMSTANCES. PREVIOUS RECENT MEETINGS OF THIS BODY HAVE BEEN CHAIRED BY THE PRIME MINISTER.

6. THE PRINCE HAS NOT SAT BACK AS HE DID IN THE SUMMER OF 1974
BUT HAS DEMONSTRATED HIS DECISION TO WORK HARD ON CURRENT
PROBLEMS AS HE ANNOUNCED AT THE CABINET MEETING OCT 31. SO FAR,
HE HAS EARNED RESPECT AND PRAISE FOR STEPPING OUT FROM BEHIND
FRANCO'S SHADOW.
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